

A New Cycle

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J. David Donahue,
Commissioner



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A pile of twisted metal goes in one end. A child's dream comes out the other.

Sound like magic?

It's actually the result of a partnership between the Indiana Department of Correction and the Villages of Indiana.

On Aug. 22, Pendleton Correctional Facility delivered 31 bicycles to the Villages to go to foster children. The bikes were refurbished by offenders under staff supervision as part of the Shifting Gears Recycled Bikes Program.

"The intent of it is to get these things back in good condition and donate them to needy children," said Neil Potter, public information officer for Pendleton Correctional Facility. "The bikes come in various stages. Some need a lot of work and some don't need quite so much."

Potter said the program includes four offenders, two in a triage outside the walls and two working in the shop inside the prison. A total of 43 bikes have been donated to the Villages while others have gone to the Hopewell Center.

"I know they straighten the wheels and that kind of thing," Potter said. "They've basically done this thing with little or no cost. The tools already exist in the facility. We have some pretty creative people, both staff and inmates, working on this thing."

DOC Commissioner J. David Donahue said the bike restoration program grew out of Wheels for the World, an effort to repair and rebuild wheelchairs.

"Wheels for the World had a lot of correlating skills that were the same as repairing bicycles," Donahue said. "Then I met with several sheriffs in the state and learned that landfills no longer accept things like bicycles and that many police stations have disabled bicycles as a result of theft or abandonment."

Donahue created a partnership between Bicycle Garage Indy and the Volunteers of America that allows for the tax-deductible donation of bikes to be passed on to DOC to be refurbished. The DOC then passes them on to the Villages.

"Of the 25,000 people we have incarcerated, a significant number come from dysfunctional families," Donahue said. "They have been the recipients of foster care at one time or they lacked a parental figure holding family values. We wanted some way to help improve things for kids and this was a reasonable connection to our ideology to promote change. The Villages was a natural partner."

Linda Adams, director of development for the Villages, said the partnership with the DOC began in mid-2005 with Project Backpack.

Using the garment factory at Indiana State Prison in Michigan City, DOC offenders assembled

backpacks for foster children and stuffed them with donated school supplies and cash. The program was repeated this year with even greater success.

She said the bikes are distributed to children throughout the state. The Villages has already placed an order for the next batch of bikes.

“They look fabulous,” Adams said. “The first shipment of six or eight bikes were specifically built for designated foster children. They even had the kids’ names on them. They were made with love and care and they were safety inspected.”

The Villages of Indiana is the state’s largest therapeutic foster-care provider. The non-profit organization offers a statewide continuum of care that addresses the needs of abused, neglected and abandoned children and is a leader in providing child abuse prevention services

About The Department of Correction

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers. The Department’s home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department’s Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.